

SERVICE DATE - DECEMBER 24, 2003

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 579X)

CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC.—ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION—
IN PARKE AND VERMILLION COUNTIES, IN

Decided: December 22, 2003

CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon an approximately 1.17-mile line of its railroad between milepost BD-191.41 at Montezuma and milepost BD-192.58 at Hillsdale in Parke and Vermillion Counties, IN. Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on May 26, 2000 (65 FR 34249-50). The exemption was scheduled to become effective on June 25, 2000, but a formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) was timely filed by the Parke County Redevelopment Commission (PCRC) to purchase the entire line.¹ On June 23, 2000, PCRC timely filed an OFA under 49 U.S.C. 10904 and 49 CFR 1152.27(c) to acquire the line pursuant to a donation by CSXT.

By decision served June 28, 2000, PCRC was found to be financially responsible, and the effective date of the decision authorizing abandonment was postponed to permit the OFA process to proceed. In a decision served July 14, 2000, PCRC was authorized under 49 U.S.C. 10904 to acquire the line by donation and the exemption was dismissed, effective on the date the sale was consummated.² However, by letter filed on October 18, 2002, the Board was notified that the parties did not intend to proceed under the OFA process.

¹ This automatically stayed the effective date of the exemption for 10 days until July 5, 2000. See 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2)(i).

² On May 22, 2000, the Indiana Department of Transportation (InDOT) filed a request for a 180-day public use condition under 49 U.S.C. 10905. Also, by petition filed on June 7, 2000, the Indiana Trails Fund, Inc. (ITF) filed a request for the issuance of a notice of interim trail use (NITU) for the entire line under the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) (Trails Act), and for a 180-day public use condition under 49 U.S.C. 10905 to negotiate with CSXT for acquisition of the right-of-way for use as a recreational trail. Both requests were held in abeyance pending completion of the OFA process.

On December 30, 2002, a NITU was issued in this proceeding: (1) authorizing ITF to negotiate an interim trail use/rail banking agreement with CSXT until June 28, 2003, for the 1.17-mile line of railroad, (2) authorizing a public use condition for ITF, InDOT, or any other interested person to negotiate with CSXT for acquisition of the right-of-way,³ and (3) extending the deadline for CSXT to consummate the abandonment and to file its notice of consummation until August 27, 2003.

On May 30, 2003, CSXT filed a request to extend the NITU negotiating period until December 26, 2003, and to extend the consummation deadline until February 26, 2004. That request was granted by decision served on June 24, 2003.

On December 10, 2003, CSXT filed a second request to extend the NITU negotiating period until June 25, 2004, and to extend the consummation deadline until August 25, 2004. CSXT states that the parties will be unable to finalize the trail use negotiations by December 26, 2003.

Because extension of the consummation notice filing deadline and the NITU negotiating period will promote the establishment of trail use and rail banking consistent with the Trails Act, and the rail carrier has indicated its willingness to continue negotiations by requesting an extension, the request will be granted. See Policy Statement on Rails to Trails Conversions, Ex Parte No. 274 (Sub-No. 13B) (ICC served Feb. 5, 1990). Accordingly, the NITU negotiation period will be extended to June 25, 2004, and the consummation notice filing deadline will be extended to August 25, 2004.⁴

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

1. CSXT's request for an extension of the NITU negotiation period and its request for an extension of time to exercise abandonment authority are granted.
2. The negotiating period under the NITU is extended until June 25, 2004.
3. The authority to abandon must be exercised on or before August 25, 2004.

³ The public use condition expired on April 16, 2003.

⁴ Under 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), a railroad may, for good cause shown, file a request for an extension of time to file a notice of consummation in abandonment proceedings.

4. This decision is effective on its service date.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary